

NOT PERFECT, BUT PRESSING ON
Phil. 3:12-16

Intro: Our passage tonight comes in the section where Paul is really giving his own personal testimony. It follows the warning of 3:1-3, and begins with verse 4.

He really does three things:

- 1) He shows what he used to depend upon as far as his relationship to God was concerned.
- 2) He tells about the difference which Christ made in his life.
- 3) He indicates that his experience as a Christian is progressive, leading to the goal of perfection.

This latter point is what we are concerned with tonight.

Verses 12-14 are PERSONAL; verses 15, 16 are GENERAL. (Read to show the difference.)

In the PERSONAL section gives two things:

- I.
- 1) A progress report. He states it twice: vv. 12a, 13a.
 - 2) The purpose of his life. This also is stated twice: vv. 12b, and 13b, 14.

From this personal section we can see several important things that should help us in our own relationship with the Lord:

- 1) He indicates that he knows that salvation has a goal.
- 2) He confesses that he has not yet reached that goal.
- 3) He reveals that the attainment of this goal is his one purpose in life: "This one thing I do."
- 4) For the attainment of this purpose there is a human side and a Divine side.

These two sides are seen all through the epistle. Let me cite one example from each chapter:

- a) Cf. 1:4, 5 with 1:6.
 - b) Cf. 2:12 with 2:13--possibly the key verses of the epistle.
 - c) Cf. 3:12a with 3:12b. And see also the two parts of 3:14. It is present again in 3:15.
 - d) Cf. 4:6 with 4:7.
- 5) He describes salvation in two unique ways, i.e., the beginning of salvation:
 - a) The end of v. 12.
 - b) The end of v. 14.
 - 6) The important words in this PERSONAL section are:
 - a) "I follow after" in v. 12.
 - b) "I press" in v. 14.

These two words are identically the same in the Greek. It means to pursue something eagerly and earnestly doing everything possible to acquire it.

Some other examples of the same verb being used by Paul are:

- (1) 1 Cor. 14:1.
- (2) 1 Tim. 6:11.
- (3) 1 Th. 5:15.

The writer of Hebrews and Peter also use it:

- (1) Heb. 12:14.
- (2) 1 Pet. 3:11.

All of these help us to understand what Paul was concerned about here in Phil. 3.

- II. In the GENERAL section we have three things:
- 1) An exhortation regarding their attitude (v. 15a).
 - 2) A promise as to what they could expect God to do (v. 15b).
 - 3) A second exhortation regarding their walk from day to day--the Greek word gives special emphasis to the details of the walk.

Again notice the blending together of the human and the divine.

Notice the paradox we have by comparing v. 15 with v. 12. The explanation is twofold:

- 1) Positional as compared with practical truth.
- 2) A comparison between the mature and the immature. This seems to be the weakest, however, since Paul includes himself in both statements.

The Lord will help us to keep our lives on track, but we must be careful about two things:

- 1) That our objective is right.
- 2) That we are not allowing our lives to be influenced by those who are less mature than we are. This makes the reading of the Word so very, very important. And it also means that we must be careful of:
 - a) The books we are reading. What about the spiritual maturity of the author?
 - b) The music we listen to, the words we sing.
 - c) The friendships we establish--esp. those which could lead to marriage.

Concl: Two things I would emphasize in closing:

- 1) Do you understand these basic truths which Paul has written about?
 - a) That salvation has a future goal.
 - b) That there are divine and human sides to our experience as Christians.
 - c) We must PRESS ON.
- 2) Are you with Paul in what he says in vv. 15, 16 as to the way you are living your life--with the right objective, depending upon God to lead you, and living up to the light that He has already given you?